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Towards a (Re)theorisation of Nationalism in Diasporas: The Irish Diaspora as an Exemplar

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ABSTRACT

The strength of diasporic nationalism is characterised by an uneven historical geography, with different diasporic communities functioning as 'hotbeds' of nationalism at different times. Mapping and explaining these historical geographies is of importance if the cultural and political experiences of diasporic existence are to be understood. It is towards a critical interrogation of the conceptual tools available to accomplish this task that this paper is dedicated. Based upon a reading of social scientific literature on the intensity of national affiliation among the nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish diaspora, and using Doreen Massey's recent advocacy of a new concept of 'space–time', the paper advances a case for a (re)theorisation of the phenomenon of diasporic nationalism. In so doing, it is hoped that it will contribute to ongoing efforts to (re)theorise migration in four main ways: firstly, by identifying a subject area that provides a forum for population geography researchers to continue their growing dialogue with social and cultural geographers on the one hand and political geographers on the other; secondly, by reviewing the contribution of migration research to work in this area to date; thirdly, by offering a (re)theorisation of diasporic nationalism that places some traditional concerns of population geography at its core; and finally, by calling upon migration researchers to engage (once again) with contemporary debates within human geography about time and space, and to reflect upon how the conceptions of time and space which inhere within their work, condition the way they *define* and *understand* the settlement experiences of migrant groups.

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INTRODUCTION

In popular rhetoric, an enduring characteristic of all diasporic populations is their fierce pride in, and loyalty to, the nation of their birth. Yet the strength of diasporic nationalism is characterised by an uneven historical geography, with different diasporic communities functioning as 'hotbeds' of nationalism at different moments in time. The patriotic flame, it would seem, is ignited and doused variably, resulting in the creation of spatial and temporal rhythms of nationalist sentiment. Mapping and explaining these historical geographies is of importance if the cultural and political experiences of diasporic

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existence are to be understood (Smith, 1995). It is towards a critical interrogation of the conceptual tools available to accomplish this task that this paper is dedicated.

The paper begins with the observation that lurking behind existing studies is the largely unexamined matter of how to conceive of 'time' and 'space'. Case studies of particular diasporic communities have certainly been marked by a near-universal awareness of the need to frame empirical materials within their proper time–space contexts. At a deeper level, however, work to date has been less interested in taking one step back and reflecting upon the manner in which different ways of thinking about time and space actually *condition* the way in which diasporic nationalism is looked at in the first instance. In a number of recent publications, Doreen Massey (1991, 1992, 1999a, b) has sought to encourage geographers to think more deeply about how particular assumptions about time and space fundamentally shape the way in which they examine their objects of enquiry. Criticising the manner in which space has traditionally been subordinate to conceptions of time, Massey offers an alternative formulation – what she calls 'space-time' – in which space is ascribed a more central role in the production of a constantly open temporality. Inspired by these observations, this paper contends that it is productive both to excavate and interrogate treatments of time and space in work undertaken on diasporic nationalism, and to explore how alternative treatments might lead to new ways of thinking about the problem.

As defined, the subject matter of this paper clearly cuts across a number of systematic branches of the discipline of geography. The study of diasporic nationalism calls simultaneously upon insights from population geographers (with their interest in the processes shaping the settlement experiences of international migrants), social and cultural geographers (with their concerns over diasporic cultures and identities), and political geographers (keen on investigating the role of transnational communities in nation and state building in the homeland). Moreover, in reflecting upon conceptions of time and space, the paper is also situated against the backdrop of more generic debates within the geographical literature. Contextualised as such, the paper might be read as a response to recent calls for a repositioning of migration research in particular (Graham, 1999; Silvay and Lawson, 1999; McHugh, 2000; Lawson, 2000) and population geography more generally (Findlay and Graham, 1991; White and Jackson, 1995), away from spatial demographic approaches and towards an engagement with the battery of new approaches which have been, and are being, experimented with at the interface between contemporary human geography and social theory.

More specifically, it is hoped that the paper will contribute to ongoing efforts to (re)theorise migration research in four main ways: firstly, by identifying a subject area that provides a forum for population geography researchers to continue their growing dialogue with social and cultural geographers on the one hand (Fielding 1992; White and Jackson, 1995; Boyle *et al.*, 1998; Silvay and Lawson, 1999; Lawson, 2000) and political geographers (Black, 1996; Mitchell, 2001) on the other; secondly, by critically reviewing the contribution of migration research to work in this area to date; thirdly, by offering a (re)theorisation of diasporic nationalism that places a number of traditional concerns within population geography at its core; and finally, by calling upon migration researchers to engage (once again) with contemporary thinking about time and space within human geography.

Set against the backdrop of reports of horrific levels of political violence and genocide in the Balkans, former Soviet states, Rwanda and East Timor, it is unsurprising that many studies that are attempting to understand the role of nationalism in diasporic communities have focused upon contemporary examples. Particularly, attention has been given to various post-imperial liberation nationalisms (Van der Veer, 1995; Brah, 1996; Harney, 1996; Loftalian, 1996; Schulze *et al.*, 1996; Walters and Lewis, 1996; Raj, 1997), and a number of post-communist nationalisms (Kolsto, 1996; Skrbis, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 1998; Lieven, 1999; Smith and Jackson, 1999).

Based upon a reading of social scientific literature on the currency of nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish diaspora, this paper seeks to explore treat-

Table 1. Permanent residence of Irish-born persons, 1841–1921 (in thousands).

Year	*Irish-born living in Ireland*	*Irish-born USA*	*Irish-born Canada*	*Irish-born Australia*	*Irish-born Great Britain*	*Persons living outside Ireland as % of total Irish-born (with exclusions noted)*
1841	8141	n/a	122	n/a	415	6.2
1851	6502	962	227	n/a	727	22.8
1861	5721	1611	286	n/a	806	32.1
1871	5307	1856	223	n/a	775	35.0
1881	5062	1855	186	213	781	37.5
1891	4581	1872	149	227	653	38.8
1901	4327	1615	102	184	632	36.9
1911	4233	1352	93	139	550	27.6
1921	n/a	1037	93	105	524	n/a

Source: Data from Akenson (1988: 182).

ments of time and space within the literature using this somewhat older diasporic world as an exemplar.[1] With over eight million emigrants leaving Ireland between 1825 and 1935 (Akenson, 1993: 56), and almost 39% of Irish-born people living outside Ireland in 1891 (Table 1), it unsurprising to note that the Irish diaspora encompasses a wide range of destinations (the UK, the US, Canada and Australia being the most prominent – see Table 1). Furthermore, it is estimated that there are some 70 million people on Earth who claim to be of Irish descent (Akenson, 1993). The longer existence of the Irish diaspora and its sheer size, therefore, makes it an excellent exemplar through which the utility of the wider agenda being pursued herein can be demonstrated.

The paper is structured into four sections. Discussion opens with a brief overview of Massey's observations on conceptions of time and space in contemporary geography. Using the Irish diaspora as a case study, an effort is then made to unearth and reflect critically upon the main conceptions of time and space which are employed in studies of diasporic nationalism. In the third section, attention is directed towards one particularly persistent time–space model: that which falls within the so-called *assimilation* approach to diasporic nationalism. This is chosen for more detailed analysis because, although ultimately failing, of all the approaches that have been adopted to date it comes closest to affording space a more central role. Through 'rescuing' those conceptions of space that inhere within the assimilation model and repositioning them inside a new framework with the metaphor of *emergence* at the fore, the final section will seek to explore fresh ways in which the historical geography of diasporic nationalism might be approached.

A BIT MORE OF 'SPACE' AND A BIT LESS OF 'TIME': THE REFLECTIONS OF DOREEN MASSEY

Doreen Massey (1991, 1992, 1999a,b) has sought to encourage geographers to think more deeply about how particular assumptions about time and space fundamentally shape the way in which they examine their objects of enquiry. In so doing, she has attempted to reinvigorate a truism that has surfaced periodically throughout geography's history: the observation that the way in which spatio-temporal processes are studied is strongly influenced by the models of time and space brought to the analysis (Raper and Livingston, 1995).

Massey's interest in questioning the hidden assumptions about time and space that underpin much contemporary geographical research derives, in part, from her concerns about the naturalisation of conceptions (both physical and human) which date from geography's post-spatial science turn towards *process*. Man-

ifest most clearly in Carlstein *et al.*, (1978) multi-volume excursion into *Timing Space* and *Spacing Time*, the incorporation of time into geographical analysis was seen as essential if the systems through which spatial patterns are produced were to be properly understood. Changes in the landscape were to be read in terms of the unfolding in time of both social and physical processes, and not merely in terms of spatial relations which *in themselves* were capable of producing geographical law and order. However, according to Massey, in turning towards process-based explanations of spatial patterns, geography may have unwittingly inherited models of time that at best undertheorise and at worst actually subordinate the role of space.

Massey's attempt to rethink the status ascribed to space can perhaps be best illustrated through reference to her observations about the problems inherent in the various modernist narratives which arguably have constituted the backbone of both human and physical geography. According to Massey, in drawing upon these narratives, many process-based studies not only ascribe time a more central role, but also adopt models of time which assume a teleology of some description (for instance, Marxism, neo-classical economics, Western development models, Darwinism, ice-sheet dynamics, etc.). Treatments of temporality in these narratives are not truly historical since progression through a number of sequences is predetermined. Time, as such, is closed: in Massey's words, 'immanent' and not 'contingent'.

Crucially for Massey, such a treatment of time in turn carries profound implications for conceptions of space. If time is immanent and not truly historical, then space is the sphere of stasis – a frozen instantiation of a pre-given historical sequence. Variations in space can only be represented as static representations of temporal processes whose direction is unquestioned. Wallerstein (1998) recently offered the label 'eternal TimeSpace' to describe this approach. Being historically dominant in economics, sociology and political science, its 'defining characteristic … is an assumption of timelessness and spacelessness, in effect, the irrelevance of time and space to the analysis' (Wallerstein, 1998: 73).

For Massey, the way out of the issue 'is not the spatialisation of the temporal.… but the representation of *space–time*' [italics added] (Massey, 1999b: 269). This begins by holding out the possibility of an open temporality, a conception of time which is truly historical. A superior model of time would ground it in the contingencies of real history. Time here embodies open creativity and is best conceived as the continuous emergence of novelty: time as a way of becoming which is open to multiple possibilities. Such a refusal to see time as immanent, Massey argues, necessitates a new approach to space too.

Here, space is best conceived as a meeting point in which social relations at all scales, from local to global, conjoin in unique ways (Massey, 1991). These social relations are permanently active and are ceaselessly 'becoming'. Crucially, the flows through space created by social relations create 'happenstance juxtapositions' that can generate 'emergent powers' and so have productive effects back on the course of evolution of the very social relations that have created them. According to Massey (1999b: 274):

> 'For time to be genuinely held open, space could be imagined as the sphere of existence of multiplicity, of the possibility of the existence of difference. Such a space is the sphere in which distinct stories co-exist, meet up, affect each other, come into conflict or co-operate. This space is not static, not a cross-section through time; it is disruptive, active and generative. It is not a closed system; it is constantly, as space–time, being made … time cannot somehow, unaided, bootstrap itself into existence … time needs space to get itself going.

Towards the end of this paper, an effort will be made to reflect upon the manner in which such a conception of time and space might inform the writing of a historical geography of nationalism in the Irish diaspora. I wish to conclude this section, however, by sketching out some of the more general implications of the approach. A starting point would be the observation that we must resist narratives that conceive of the historical geography of diasporic nationalism in terms of immanent models of time. Suspicion might be cast in

particular upon case studies that attempt to understand expressions of nationalism in terms of wider models of stages of diasporic formation: the classic problem of viewing space as a slice through time. Instead, emphasis needs to be placed upon the spaces in which diasporic communities reside as productive of nationalist practices. To paraphrase Massey, nationalism does not simply 'bootstrap itself into existence'; it too needs 'space to get itself going.'

For Massey, the diaspora might best be conceived as an arena in which nationalist stories meet up with a host of other stories in ways that cannot be anticipated. Nationalism here would be treated as one kind of story, which fuses, contradicts and collides with numerous others. The result is a combination of 'differences' which conjoin in unique ways in particular time–space conjunctures and which, as a consequence, lead to new 'emergent powers'. Through foregrounding 'happenstance juxtapositions', space is afforded a more active role in shaping unpredictable futures. The historical geography of diasporic nationalism, then, is best conceived as an open and contingent process forged out of the *emergences* that characterise diasporic relations with peoples in destination spaces.

THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS INHERENT IN EXISTING TIME–SPACE FRAMEWORKS

On the face of it, mapping the historical geography of nationalism in diasporic communities ought to be a misnomer; after all, the very essence of the term *diaspora*, as originally conceived at any rate, assumes tautologically the existence of an *entire group* of homesick, nostalgic and fiercely patriotic international exiles. Everywhere ought to be a hotbed of nationalist sentiment! Moreover, whilst the term has been appropriated more widely in literature on international migration, its traditional meanings still resonate with the particular community of interest here – the Irish. Cohen (1997: 178), for instance, classifies the Irish alongside the Jewish, African, Armenian and Palestinian diasporas, as a classic example of a victim/refugee diaspora. British colonial conquest over Gaelic Ireland and the long history of British oppression are assumed to form a key context. Those waves of emigration which followed the Great Irish Famine of 1848–1851 are taken to be symbolic of a wider experience of *exile*: what Jacobson (1995) referred to as 'special sorrows'. On the assumption that there are no greater patriots than disaffected exiles, one might suspect that Irish nationalism was strong and deep-rooted, therefore, in all areas of the diaspora in equal measure.

Nonetheless, tautological contradiction or not, studies of the Irish diaspora have been marked by a keen interest in the historically and geographically variable intensities of expressions of forms of both cultural and political nationalism. In this section, the intention is to excavate and interrogate the conceptions of time and space which inhere within literature that has taken an interest in these spatial and temporal rhythms of patriotic zeal. It is useful to begin by noting the existence of three broad approaches to the mapping of the historical geography of diasporic nationalism. Crudely, these can be referred to as the 'emigrant', 'homeland' and 'immigrant' perspectives. It is usual to detect the presence of all three in any one case study and, although separated for heuristic purposes here, it is the precise ways in which they are combined that mark out differences between studies. Each perspective can be shown to adopt a different model of time–space. These can be referred to as the 'dispersal', 'diffusion' and 'assimilation' models respectively.

The emigrant approach traces the historical geography of diasporic nationalism to antecedent conditions in the region of origin. Migrants in different homeland regions are subjected to different experiences. These experiences condition the strength of their attachments to the national cause. Nationalist movements are therefore stronger in some regions than others. As waves of migration propel different regional cohorts into different destinations, so the historical geography of diasporic nationalism becomes forged (Verdicchio, 1997). It is the dispersal of different migrant cohorts that shapes the times and spaces of diasporic nationalism. The work of Miller (1985; Miller *et al.*, 1980) provides a paradigm example of the use of such a thesis in the context of the Irish diaspora.

The homeland perspective seeks to understand the rise and fall of diasporic nationalism not in terms of *a priori* emigrant cultures, but instead in terms of the rise and fall of nationalist movements in the homeland. Here the extent to which the patriotic flame is ignited or doused is seen as being conditioned by events occurring back home. Time and space are conceived in terms of a diffusion model. The rise of a particular nationalist movement (either cultural or political) sends a pulse through the diaspora which steadily becomes diluted as it diffuses. This pulse resonates with some diasporic communities more than others, thus carving out distinctive historical geographies of diffusion. This kind of reasoning pervades the literature on the Irish diaspora, and is arguably best illustrated in studies charting the global diffusion of the Fenian movement in the 1860s (Funchion, 1976; Lowe, 1989).

In contrast to the emigrant and homeland approaches, the immigrant reading assumes that above all other factors it is the conditions that prevailed in destination regions that have been most influential. The literature on the Irish diaspora is replete with the notion that immigrants found their new environments alienating and disorientating, and in many instances inhospitable and hostile. In the context of feelings of alienation and cultural worthlessness, existential insecurity and ontological crises, nationalist identities begin to flourish to provide a rootedness and sense of self. Because the degree of hostility experienced by migrants varies between settlements, so too might one expect spatial variations in the intensity of nationalist expression. In those reception centres where Irish communities have been *allowed* to integrate, or where Irish communities have been most *skilled* at integration, nationalism wanes fastest. The predominant conception of time and space which inheres within this application of the immigrant approach, therefore, relates outbursts of nationalism to the historical and geographically variable experiences of immigrants in different destinations and their successful assimilation (Fallows, 1979).

To what extent do the treatments of time and space inherent within the emigrant, homeland and immigrant approaches to diasporic nationalism fall foul of the problems Massey recognises within human geography generally? Whilst reflection upon the dispersal, diffusion and assimilation models points to different limitations, all three ultimately succumb to the same problem – the presence of a theoretically anodyne conception of space which drains it of important causal properties. This treatment of space, moreover, not only presents *theoretical* problems; it has also carried in its wake a number of *political* challenges which have remained for too long implicit.

In *theoretical* terms, the treatment of time and space within the dispersal model is perhaps the least satisfactory. Here, *both* time and space are drained of causal properties. The historical geography of diasporic nationalism simply represents a rearrangement in time and space of an existing antecedent geography of nationalism. Nationalism is simply carried through time–space; the journey itself plays no role in its constitution. In the case of the diffusion model, the temporal evolution of political and cultural nationalist movements in the homeland are given primacy, with the diasporic expression of these movements being controlled by the intensity of the initial pulse and its transmission globally. Space may condition the extent to which this pulse resonates with different communities, but ultimately the path of diffusion, dilution and extinction will follow. Finally, at one level the assimilation model probably comes closest to Massey's formulation. Here space *is* afforded a greater role in creating spatial and temporal rhythms of nationalist sentiment. Assimilation, the controlling switch that ignites and douses the strength of attachment to the home nation, is seen to be spatially variable because social conditions vary across the diaspora. Nevertheless, the fundamental teleology of acculturation is ultimately accepted as a given. The process of integration provides a basic temporal frame upon which space does play a role, but space is not in the last instance a determinant of the trajectory of patriotic passions.

The subservience of space to time in existing work also presents a number of *political* problems. Theorisations of the when and where of nationalist activities in diasporic communities clearly provide a backdrop to

the intervention by state and other institutions to repress, (re)engineer and transform and, conceivably at times, inflate patriotic zeal. The language of the dispersal model, for instance, appears ubiquitously in debates over asylum-seekers, a factor of admittance often being from which part of a troubled country the applicant derives. Likewise, witness the contours of the diffusion model in debates over the need for the surveillance and policing of particular diasporic communities at times of political excitement in the homeland. Arguably, however, the political ramifications of the assimilation model have been of the greatest consequence, with the concept of assimilation supporting the hugely controversial introduction by state institutions of a battery of instruments of socialisation designed to absorb diasporic communities into the fabric of the host nation (Hickman, 1999). In short, existing conceptions of time and space in theories of the historical geography of diasporic nationalism are not only bereft of satisfactory treatments of space, but also carry a number of potentially problematic political implications. To offer a (re)theorisation of time and space in this context, then, is also to challenge the range of political agendas which have both assumed and worked to reproduce a limited number of flawed time–space conceptions.

CONCEPTIONS OF 'SPACE' IN THE ASSIMILATION MODEL

Given that the assimilation model courts space to a greater extent than the other two approaches identified above, I propose to isolate it for greater examination here. In so doing, an effort will be made to excavate the treatments of space which often lie implicit within studies that adopt the assimilation narrative as their overarching framework. By studying how space *has* been treated to date, the ground can then be cleared for the final section which will seek to develop upon existing approaches through reference to the alternative concept of space–time. In attempting to clarify precisely how space has and could be worked into studies of diasporic nationalism, use will be made of Agnew's (1987) identification of the three dominant meanings which attach to the concept of *place*; 'location', 'sense of place' and 'locale'. Whilst these concepts are rarely referenced explicitly, they can be shown to pervade migration research in general and studies of the settlement experiences of diasporeans in particular. If teased out and developed in the abstract, they provide a platform from which population geographers can enter contemporary debates about diasporic nationalism.

The Assimilation Model and Time

In their overview of the difficulties migrants faced in settling into cities across the UK in the Victorian period, Gilley and Swift (1985; Swift, 1992) pointed to four dimensions through which the Irish were outcasts:

> 'outcasts from British capitalism as the poorest of the poor, from mainstream British politics as separatist nationalists and republicans, from the "Anglo-Saxon" race as "Celts", and as Catholics from the dominant forms of British Protestantism. The Irish were outcasts of Victorian Britain on the basis of class, nationality, race, and religion.' (Gilley and Swift, 1985:8–9)

The prevalence of existential difficulties which therein arose has led to the claim that diasporic communities experienced a heightened search for a redemptive identity. As O'Tuathaigh (1985:30) argued:

> 'For the Irish immigrants in nineteenth-century Britain, expatriate nationalism may have served an important and complex psychological function, giving, as it did, an exalted sense of purpose to lives that were otherwise spent in adverse social circumstances, and by demanding freedom for the homeland, allowing immigrants to engage in a kind of revolt by proxy against their own depressed condition.'

Likewise, according to McCaffrey (1976, 1997), Irish nationalism in the US was often more passionate than that exhibited back in Ireland itself. For McCaffrey, the central problematic to be explained is what kinds of experiences in North America might turn relatively 'indifferent peasants' into 'fierce and aggressive nationalists'. The intensity of nationalist affiliation derived, he argued, from

migrants' experiences in destination areas, and specifically in the emerging conurbations. According to McCaffrey (1997: 139, 141):

> 'Despising the English was cathartic for Irish-American tensions and frustrations, a way of expressing and explaining Irish failure, a means of striking out at real and imaginary enemies .... Irish nationalism jelled and flourished in the ghettos of urban-America as an identity search, a cry for vengeance, and a quest for respectability.'

Examining the rise and fall of Irish nationalism in Australia between the 1850s and the 1920s, O'Farrell (1987) similarly argued that the environments into which the Irish moved proved the most decisive factor in moulding the trajectory of Irish nationalist identities. O'Farrell (1987: 6, 197) concluded:

> 'The expression of Irish nationalism was never simply an expression of loyalty to Ireland: it was also a part of the process of settlement, a mode of testing the Australian environment and of the Irish-Australian interaction with it, a way of defining who and where Irish Australians were .... Such nationalism became strong only when it coincided with, or could be made to express, local grievances.'

Through time, however, the Irish begin to make inroads into their new communities and slowly the strength of nationalism wanes. More comfortable in their new environments, they begin to lose their dependence on nationalism as a psychological buffer. According to McCaffrey (1976):

> 'Since the 1920s, the American Irish have passed through their identity crises .... and as a result have lost their psychological dependence on Irish nationalism as a potential instrument of nationality .... The Irish are too successful in America to think much about Ireland .... The American Irish have lost or abandoned their historical memories.'

Likewise, in O'Farrell's (1987) study of Irish Australia, the erosion of Irish nationalism wrought by assimilation is testified. According to O'Farrell (1987: 18), by as early as the 1880s, the Irish had 'vanished into prosperity ... Australia gradually leached and bleached their substance'. By the 1950s, 'the old Irish Australia, that of heritage and sentiment, had been almost totally absorbed by its Australian concerns, with merely an occasional nod to its origins' (O'Farrell, 1987: 307).

The Concepts of 'Location' and 'Sense of Place' in the Assimilation Model

Place can be seen to make a difference in the immigrant approach firstly in terms of the concepts of 'location' and 'sense of place'. For Agnew (1987: 28), location referred to 'the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economic processes operating at a wider scale'. Places are defined in terms of their location in international divisions of labour, and the unique social structures which arise therein can be seen to resolve into distinctive 'structured coherences' (Harvey, 1985). 'Sense of place', in contrast, refers to place identities: the multiple stories about peoples, nations, regions, cities, neighbourhoods and streets which serve to furnish places with specific meanings and cultural significance.

In the present context, reflection upon the 'location' of diasporic communities would involve understanding their position in relation to, say, local class structures. How similar or dissimilar are social structures in destination regions compared with those at the point of origin? How quickly do diasporic communities acclimatise to the new social and economic conditions? Does upward social mobility occur speedily and at what point do the Irish become socially and economically invisible from the rest of the population? The concept of 'sense of place' would then refer to how similar or dissimilar destination cultures are to those of diasporeans. Do diasporic populations feel at home in their places of settlement? Do they feel a sense of attachment or connection or empathy with the local community? At what juncture do diasporeans affiliate more with the places in which they settle than the places from which they derive? Location and sense of place manifest themselves in the present context, therefore, in terms of spatial variations in the social, economic and cultural conditions prevalent

in different reception centres which serve to support or undermine successful assimilation.

Recent historiography of the Irish in the UK has sought to challenge the assumption that all migrant streams suffered equal levels of difficulty. According to Davis (1991: 82):

> 'English and Scottish attitudes to the Irish presence were complex and ambivalent … The variety of experiences and responses to Irish migration in Britain was rooted in the specific conditions that obtained in the different communities in which they settled.'

Whilst most heated reaction tended to be found in the key reception points of Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Cardiff, migrants also settled in other environments which were more conducive to assimilation such as Dundee, Edinburgh, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Hull, Bath and Bristol. As a consequence, these centres were not marked by such a heightened degree of nationalism.

Indeed, even more detailed studies in the largest and most hostile reception centres point to different degrees of nationalist sentiment. In his study of Lancashire between the mid-1840s to mid-1870s, for instance, Lowe (1989; see also Neal, 1988) painted a picture of a region in which the Irish faced extraordinary difficulties in settling and, as a consequence, developed a strong sense of nationality as a defence mechanism. In contrast to Lancashire, Glasgow generated a less hostile environment (Smith, 1984). The levels of hostility experienced by the Irish in Glasgow stimulated a strong adherence to the Catholic religion and the growth between 1870 and the early 1920s of political nationalist movements including the Home Rule Movement and Sinn Féin. Nevertheless, such hostility was less pervasive than in other parts of the UK (Mitchell, 1998). In the 1840s, a time when many migrants arrived, the established Protestant churches were internally divided. Moreover, Glasgow's heavy engineering base produced a less competitive labour market. With the growth of the Liberal Party from 1880, the Labour Party from the early 1920s, and the welfare state from 1945, the possibility of a serious sectarian division in the city diminished (Smith, 1984; Gallagher, 1987).

The role of 'location' and 'sense of place' within studies of the Irish in the US manifests itself most clearly in the form of a claim for the existence of an east/west divide. It was in the larger and longer established eastern seaboard cities that the Irish found greatest difficulty in settling. Perhaps the best example is Boston. According to O'Connor (1995: XV1, 301):

> 'The experience of the Irish in Boston was not like that of other immigrants to other nineteenth century American cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St Louis, and Chicago, where … immigrants assimilated with native populations that were themselves a fairly recent vintage. Boston was old and long settled. Its clash of cultures was immediate and violent; its religious conflicts bitter and irreconcilable, its social differences, stark and painful … The generations of bitter and unyielding conflict between the natives of Boston and the newcomers from Ireland would forever mould the social and political character of the Boston Irish in ways not found elsewhere.'

If the longer established eastern seaboard centres provided the Irish with difficulties, those western cities which grew from the expansion of frontier development proved more welcoming. As a consequence, the Irish assimilated much sooner and thus the currency of Irish nationalism was less deep-seated. According to Sarbaugh (1992: 5):

> 'The Irish western community is seen to develop differently from the rest of Irish America because it lacked the eastern established elite, the extreme religious and racial bigotry and the pervasive economic and social discrimination. The western frontier proved to be frightfully liberating for Irish immigrants, and it was the impact of this social and economic fluidity of the west upon Irish immigrants that distinguished them from their eastern counterparts, creating an innovative and enterprising spirit and resulting in Irish immigrants who achieved success, socially, culturally and politically.'

Where did the frontier begin, however? Vinyard (1976) referred to Detroit and Michigan as frontier towns at the time of Irish immigration (1840–1870), quite unlike New

York, Philadelphia and Boston. It is in Burchell's (1979) study of San Francisco (1848–1880), however, that the greatest contrast with eastern cities can be observed. Being a new, emerging, young and cosmopolitan frontier town, the Irish received a much friendlier welcome than that offered in eastern cities. They quickly settled into life in California and, consequently, did not generate the same kind of patriotic zeal that characterised their eastern neighbours.

Finally, in the Australian context, a number of features of 'place' made integration easier and nationalism thus less virulent. Here, the fact that a larger percentage of migrants settled in a relatively unpopulated country, began working life in a familiar agrarian economy, and comprised a large enough proportion of the national population to be able to influence the evolution of Australian politics itself, all played a role in diminishing the difficulties of settlement and thus promoted quicker and more harmonious integration. In his efforts to account for the relatively easier assimilation of the Irish in Australia, MacDonagh (1989: 163) stated:

> 'The key, it seems to me, is that the Irish were a founding people in Australia, and maintained their position in the new society more or less, for almost a century and a half … In the United States, as a fortiori in west Britain, the Catholic Irish, at least, entered a firmly stratified society, an already elaborated class structure, and an established, or more precisely, a fixed economy. *En masse*, they were doomed, initially, to slotting into the bottom layers or even layer, of the hierarchy of occupations.'

The Concept of 'Locale' in the Assimilation Model

Within the assimilation thesis, a connection is also assumed to exist between geographical dispersal and social integration. Here, the spatialities of settlement inside particular reception centres were assumed to both reflect prevailing patterns of hostility whilst simultaneously deepening the marginalisation faced by the Irish. It is here that the concept of 'locale', defined by Agnew (1987: 28) as encompassing the immediate 'settings in which social relations are constituted', can be shown to be important. First and foremost, the degree of spatial polarisation of the Irish is taken to be an indicator not only of their exclusion from labour and housing markets, but also of the degree of cultural alienation they felt in the places in which they settled. Migrants fell back on their Irishness as a cultural shield against existential insecurity and, as such, chose to reside in environments where their nationality and identity would be understood and allowed to prosper.

Given that eastern cities in the US, and the larger older industrial conurbations in the UK, were regarded as constituting the most hostile reception centres, so spatial polarisation was seen to be most pronounced in these settlements. In case studies of these reception centres one encounters frequent reference to the formation of distinctive locales: 'Irish ghettos', 'Little Irelands', 'paddy camps', 'Irish enclaves', 'urban villages', or simply 'Irish slums' (Lees, 1979; Ward, 1982; Mitchell, 1988). In his study of Philadelphia, Clarke (1973: 180) indeed argued that the Irish were pioneers of the very concept of the ethnic ghetto.

For some, the formation of Irish ghettos heightened attachment to Irish nationalism. By drawing attention to differences between immigrant and host, the 'Little Irelands' made it more difficult for the Irish to integrate. In the words of Ward (1982: 272): 'the ghetto becomes a cul-de-sac for immigrants rather than the ground floor of an "elevator" of immigrant advancement'. The logic would seem to be that social polarisation caused spatial polarisation which in turn deepened social polarisation and so on – a process of mutual reinforcement.

This logic also manifests itself in reverse. In the Australian context, for instance, O'Farrell (1987: 12, 66) attributed the lack of intensity of Irish nationalism, in part, to the dispersal of Irish migrants:

> 'Elsewhere, close urban or rural living might exacerbate confrontations; here a comparatively vacant land both fostered people's tolerance of each other and permitted them a degree of freedom to live apart and be themselves. Australian distances both separated people and drew them together … The

> land was too vast, too empty, to be a mere backdrop to social questions; it conditioned these questions and the way they were pursued.'

The implication seems to be, therefore, that spatial polarisation both reflected and caused social polarisation, whilst more welcoming environments generated looser spatial formations which in turn reinforced the process of integration. Whilst this treatment of the role of locales is predominant, it is worthwhile noting that subtler relationships between spatiality and social assimilation do appear in more sophisticated analysis. The positive contribution of the ghetto to assimilation permeates Clarke's (1973) more nuanced account of Philadelphia, for instance. Here, the formation of a ghetto is assumed to create a tension; whilst it does lead to greater separatism, it also furnishes migrants with both the confidence and skill to integrate. Far from constituting an 'urban fortress', Irish enclaves might have functioned as beachheads, therefore, and may have promoted rather than retarded integration.

DIASPORA SPACES AND THE CONCEPT OF *EMERGENCE*: TOWARDS A FOCUS UPON HOW 'NEWNESS ENTERS THE WORLD'

In this final section, I wish to use this more detailed exposition of treatments of space in the assimilation model as a springboard to advance a new way in which one might approach the writing of historical geographies of nationalism in diaspora. In beginning to grapple with the role of 'location', 'sense of place' and 'locale' in producing spatial and temporal rhythms of diasporic nationalism, the assimilation model arguably offers a superior theorisation than its counterparts. Ultimately, however, it suffers from its subservience to 'time'. The teleology built into the thesis rests on the supposition that an initial heightening of nationalism progressively gives way, first to socio-economic integration, second to cultural assimilation, and finally to spatial invisibility. Eventually, once absorbed into host societies, nationalism diminishes to only a trace, and then ultimately peters into extinction. As Massey would put it, space, to the extent that it enters into the model, is 'convened' by time. Socio-economic (location) and cultural (sense of place) conditions in different destinations and particular spatialities of settlement (locale) operate merely to accelerate or decelerate the process. Space has an active role only in so far as it controls the speed and intensity with which the patriotic flame is ignited and doused.

To move beyond the constraints of the assimilation model, therefore, what is required is a bit more of 'space' and a bit less of 'time'. In the first instance then, the concepts of location, sense of place and locale need to be rescued from the overarching assimilation mentality that they have so far been cast within, and reconsidered against the backdrop of Massey's alternative formulation of *space–time*. This recasting of the three concepts of place must begin by taking Massey literally when she argues for an approach which foregrounds the way in which 'stories co-exist, meet up, affect each other, come into conflict or co-operate' (Massey, 1999b: 274). Diasporic communities can be conceived as places where different stories – different *narratives* of nations, regions, cities, neighbourhoods and peoples – creolise and hybridise.

It is crucial to realise that what is at stake here is more that simply a statement about the importance of local context. In Massey's formulation, *how* to think of the importance of local context is the key. In writing the historical geography of national identification from this kind of perspective, emphasis would be placed upon *emergence*: the way in which relationships between migrants and the spaces into which they move, conceived now in terms of the combined workings of location, sense of place and locale, operate to create something new. In Massey's terms (1999b: 273) emergence is characterised by a concept of 'time as a way of becoming that is never a mere re-arrangement of what already was'.

To argue that the metaphors of dispersal, diffusion and assimilation ought now to be replaced with one of *emergence* is, however, insufficient. Whilst invoking the helpful image of place as a meeting point in which a confluence of stories or narratives come together to create 'new forms of belonging'

(Bromley, 2000), *emergence* still stands as something of a chaotic concept. It requires more detailed specification. It is here that contemporary theorisations of diaspora within cultural studies becomes useful. Whilst clearly not situated against the backdrop of new formulations of space and time within geography, this work arguably provides advocates of Massey's thinking with some of the most sophisticated examples of the potential of the concept of space–time.

In the remainder of this paper, therefore, the recent literature on diaspora in cultural studies is briefly reviewed. Included are examples of where this work has started to creep into and inform research on the Irish diaspora specifically. In so doing, the ways in which concepts of place, which inhere within this literature, articulate with the more orthodox geographical notions of location, sense of place and locale will be considered. Given the sheer scope and complexity of this literature, it is important to note that the following discussion is partial and highly schematic; it is merely offered as a signpost for possible new theoretical directions for migration research.

According to Brah (1996), the places within which diasporic communities settle are best conceptualised as *diaspora spaces*. Of crucial importance in this conception is the treatment of the biographies of diasporic subjects as intimately interwoven with indigenous populations. As the trajectories of both settlers and indigenes become imbricated in one another, so too the significance of these labels wane. For Brah (1996: 209), the notion of diaspora spaces implied 'the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those "staying put". The diaspora space is the site where *the native is as much a diasporean as the diasporean is the native*.' The implications of this claim vary according to the scale of analysis; in the Irish case, for instance, it might be equally legitimate to think of either whole countries (US, Australia and Britain) or cities (New York, Melbourne and Liverpool) as diaspora spaces.

The entanglement of a multiplicity of biographies in diaspora spaces needs to be conceptualised as simultaneously being mediated by what Brah (1996) referred to as different modalities of power. Brah (1996) invoked the concept of *multi-axial power* to refer to the manner in which different modalities of power (principally class, race, gender, ethnicity, nationalism, generation and sexuality) intersect in diasporic spaces. Diasporic communities are organised around different modalities of power and in the course of settlement are inserted into prevailing modalities of power in indigenous communities. The result is that diasporic communities can be marginalised along one modality of power but can be privileged in relation to another. This notion – that the binaries insider/outsider, majority/minority and exclusion/inclusion need to be understood as being complicated by the multiple social relations which exist both within and between diasporic and indigenous populations – has found its way into the literature on the Irish diaspora in the work of a number of feminist scholars in particular. The complicated positioning of Irish women at the juncture of different axes of power (man/women, white/black, manual/professional, Irish/British) has been explored, for instance, by Walter (1995, 2001), Gray (2000), Ghaill (2001) and Hickman (2000).

The concept of *diaspora spaces* as a site of entanglement of a range of biographies, all cast into relief by the place-specific criss-crossing of underlying modalities of power, forms the backbone of a range of recent treatments of diaspora within cultural studies (Gilroy, 1987, 1993; Bhabba, 1990, 1994). As a specification of *place*, however, the notion of diasporic space covers only limited ground. Whilst it does not map neatly on to any of the three orthodox concepts of place introduced above, its nearest neighbour would seem to be the notion of sense of place. In demanding an appreciation of the multiple cultural locations that characterise diasporic existence, the cultural studies literature is in effect asking researchers to take seriously migrants' encounters with local worlds of meaning. Productive linkages might be forged, then, between cultural analysts pursuing the concept of diaspora spaces, and more traditional migration research which either implicitly or explicitly makes use of the concept of sense of place.

Arguably, the concept of diaspora spaces might be further enhanced if it is set against the backdrop of a wider conception of place which includes the notions of location and

locale. The locally specific reproduction/transformation of different modalities of power might be better appreciated if situated against the global structural forces that leave distinctive footprints on particular local economies and class structures (place as location). Likewise, the entanglement of the biographies of diasporeans and indigenes might be better understood if the spatiality of diasporeans in diaspora spaces are better understood (place as locale). Does not the formation of ethnic ghettos, for instance, play a fundamental role in shaping the kinds of biographical encounters that are possible in diaspora spaces? The concept of diaspora spaces, then, might be both *enriched* by entering a dialogue with the existing notion of sense of place, and *expanded* if made to articulate with alternative formulations of place.

In the entanglements of the biographies of diasporic subjects and indigenes, new *borderzones* are created. Borderzones, both in a territorial and metaphorical sense, are characterised by the grating together of groups defined as different (Barkan and Shelton, 1998). At one level, these zones or liminal spaces can be conceived of as sites of repression where difference is demarcated and intolerance dominant (Mitchell, 1997). According to Bhabba (1990, 1994), however, borderzones can also be highly productive locations. In his account, Bhabba referred to those 'gaps' in 'subject positions' which are created when different narratives of nations, classes, genders, generations, sexualities, and so on, collide with one another as 'interstices' or 'third-spaces'. It is in these interstices that one begins to get a glimpse of the mechanisms through which 'newness enters the world' (Bhabba, 1994: 224).

As a site of production of new forms of belonging, it is in borderzones that Massey's concept of emergence is most clearly evident. However, locating emergence in the context of interstitial spaces is still insufficient. The concept demands yet greater specification. It is here that use might be made of De Certeau's (1984) distinction between *strategies* and *tactics*. In the present context, *strategies* might be conceived of as efforts made to translate the voids inherent in liminal spaces into diasporic identities which make sense *in relation* to the indigenous population. Strategies would entail deliberate and reflexive attempts to position the diasporic community in relation to the broader diaspora space; to render interstitial spaces legible in relation to destination cultures; and to centralise the margins. *Tactics*, by contrast, constitute more subversive third-spaces, in so far as they represent the becoming of identities in the absence of a central reference point. Tactics are characterised by improvisation, spontaneity and geographies of the now.

To elaborate, the notion of *emergence as strategy* might be approached in terms of three particular types of cultural translation. Firstly, taking seriously Smith and Jackson's (1999: 18) call for a concentrated interest in the way in which 'the process of scattering that makes diasporas leads to *different ways of narrating the nation in different places and at different times*' [italics added], attention might be given to the role of diaspora spaces in the transformations of narratives of the home nation. In the first instance, therefore, one might seek to understand how the intersection of Irish nationalism and local discourse has had implications for Irish nationalism itself. Here, concepts such as 'liberty', 'citizenship', 'republicanism', 'landlordism', 'imperialism' and 'democracy', inherent in localised discourse, might profitably be conceived as filtering through Irish nationalism to alter the diaspora's 'take' on Ireland's past, its culture and political status (Busteed, 1998; Arrowsmith, 1999).

Secondly, the interstices between Irish nationalism and local worlds of meaning might also be conceived as providing a fertile ground for critiquing narratives of the nation, not merely transforming them. Lavie and Swedenburg (1996:13) captured what is at stake here in their call for a 'guerrilla warfare of the interstices'. To this end, one might research the role of diaspora spaces in the emergence of what Maley (1999) referred to as Irish nationalism's three biggest challenges; revisionism, feminism and post-nationalism. The work of feminists on the Irish diaspora in Britain has once again been at the forefront of attempts to pioneer such an agenda (Walter, 1995, 2001; Gray, 2000; Ghaill, 2001).

Finally, best exemplified in Gilroy's (1987) theorisation of black protest in Britain as

constituting a series of urban social movements, exploration of interstitial spaces might seek to examine the domestic cultural forms that are created in the gaps between Irish nationalism and other local discourse. Although not cast in terms of the notion of emergence, a number of studies of the Irish diaspora already provide promising insights into these forms of hybrid cultures (Campbell, 1999). The intermeshing of Irish republicanism and local political discourses, for instance, provides a starting point for: O'Connor (1995) and Ryan's (1988) study of democratic party politics in Boston; Marston's (1989) analysis of labour struggles in nineteenth century Lowell; Jacobson's (1995) analysis of the response of the North American Irish political lobby to Cuba's drive for independence and the United States' imperial expansion into the Phillipines in the late nineteenth century; Davis' (1991) reflections on the relationships which existed in the early nineteenth century between Irish nationalism and the Chartist movement in the UK; and O'Farrell's (1987) account of the role of the Irish in the formation of Australian national identity. It is in these hybrid cultural movements that the traces of patriotic zeal reside.

The operationalisation of the concept of *emergence as tactic* would seem to present more challenging theoretical problems. In embarking upon this task nonetheless, useful connections might be made with Nigel Thrift's recent and radical attempts to formulate what he refers to as *non-representational theory*. This approach seeks to critique geography's historical reliance upon 'lifeless' representations of the world which subdue the notion that places are ceaselessly becoming and are characterised by constant flux and flow. According to Thrift and Dewsbury (2000), in place of representation needs to be a theory of *practice*, in which the full fluidity of the hybridisation of place identity is emphasised. Rejecting the concept of culture as text (which would be central to the treatment of emergence as strategy), non-representational theory approaches culture as performance (Thrift, 2000). Here, diasporic identity would be conceived in terms of the fleeting and transitory senses of self that are constantly created out of the everyday entanglements of diasporean and indigenous biographies. Instead of seeing these entanglements as a foundation from which new hybridised identity projects emerge, non-representational theory would call for an appreciation of the performative nature of social encounters in diaspora spaces, and thus the temporary, happenstance, and sheer unpredictable kinds of senses of Irishness which emerge. Instead of 'dead' geographies, which try to 'fix' historical geographies of Irish national identity according to some overarching master narrative, non-representational theory would focus upon geographies of the 'now' – the multiplicity of forms of Irishness which emerge out of the millions of perfomances which take place in the everyday encounters that mark diaspora spaces.

CONCLUSION

In seeking to offer a (re)theorisation of the historical geography of nationalism in diasporic communities, this paper has advanced the claim that existing studies are replete with historical and geographical imaginations which often lie dormant and unexamined. And yet these imaginations play a crucial role in conditioning the way in which particular expressions of diasporic nationalism are understood. As such, the argument advanced herein is that it is productive both to excavate and interrogate treatments of time and space in work undertaken on diasporic nationalism to date, and to explore how alternative treatments might lead to new ways of thinking about the problem. Based upon a reading of social scientific literature on the currency of nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish diaspora, and using Doreen Massey's recent advocacy of a new concept of *space–time*, this paper has sought to begin this task in this particular diasporic world.

In ascribing to space a greater role in shaping a much more contingent historical geography than hitherto appreciated, it is argued that it is in the interaction between migrants and destination regions that historical geographies of diasporic nationalism become forged. Once again, it is crucial to appreciate that much more is being implied here than the notion that local contexts make a difference. One would hardly need an excur-

sion into Doreen Massey's theoretical reflections on time and space to establish this point. Moreover, as the more detailed reading of the assimilation perspective offered has already shown, it is clear that this point is already well established. The concept of space–time brings to the surface a more fundamental claim; that local contexts are *productive* in the creation of an unpredictable history. The notion of *emergence* would seem to be a more suitable metaphor than those of diffusion, dispersal and assimilation, in conditioning how one might approach the task of writing historical geographies.

In specifying how the notion of emergence might be developed, a review of recent treatments of the diaspora concept in cultural studies was presented. At the heart of this work is Brah's notion of *diaspora spaces*. Whilst this concept provides a sophisticated window into the ways in which local places make a difference, I have argued that it might be both *enriched* and *expanded* if embedded within the more orthodox treatments of place as location, sense of place and locale. As I have shown above, these are concepts that population geographers in general, and migration researchers in particular, have already played a role in developing and operationalising – sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, sometimes using these exact terms, other times drawing upon a parallel vocabulary. There is much, therefore, that population geographers and migration researchers already have at their disposal that could profitably feed into the production of an improved concept of diaspora spaces.

By rescuing the concepts of location, sense of place and locale from the assimilation framework, and by making these concepts articulate with the notion of diaspora spaces, this paper contends that population geographers have a core role to play in emerging theorisations of diasporic nationalism. Massey (1999b: 274) concluded her most recent paper on space-time by posing the question:

> 'I can see what all this [her reflections on the concept of space–time] means in my neck of the woods. I have an idea of how it means we must rethink globalisation, re-imagine regions/places/nation states, reconceptualise cities. But does it bear any relation to ways of thinking about space in other parts of the geographical forest? Do you have similar debates? Can we talk?'

In so far as migration research has an already rich tradition of theorising the role of place in the settlement experiences of migrants (Silvay and Lawson, 1999), this paper concludes that at least with regard to the theorisation of diasporic nationalism, population geography is well equipped to make a meaningful contribution to the emerging debate.

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NOTES

(1) According to Akenson (1992), among the more blatant denials perpetrated by the recent historiography of the Irish community in the US is the fact that the bulk of the 'Irish ethnic group' (those claiming to be of Irish origin) at present is, and probably always has been, Protestant. Such an observation is a necessary corrective to the assumption that the Irish in the US are, and always have been, Catholic. It is clearly foolhardy to equate in any simple way Protestantism with loyalist and unionist historical cosmologies, particularly in historical discussions. Nevertheless, to the extent that such associations can be made, it is important to note that the expressions of Irish nationalism which are examined here may indeed be antithetical to the sense of national identity held by some diasporic communities.

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